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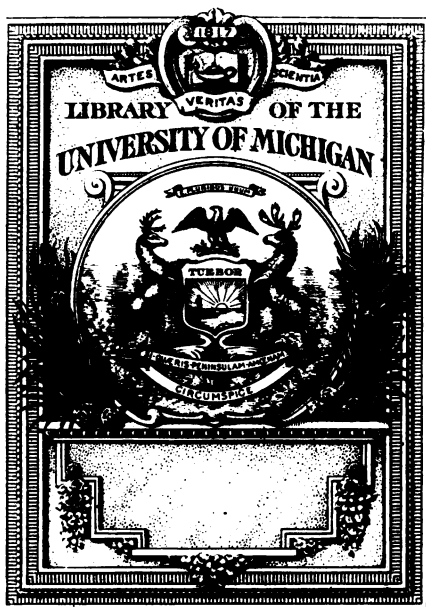
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No. 275.

27.

THE RED LAMP

A Play in Two Acts

BY
HILLIARD BOOTH

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THE RED LAMP

A Play in Two Acts

BY
HILLIARD BOOTH

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THE RED LAMP.

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MATILDA DEERING.....*A rich spinster*
HAROLD DEERING.....*Her nephew*
ALICE DEERING.....*Harold's sister*
ARCHIE CLARKE.....*A young lawyer*
BILL WORTH.....*A man of all trades*
ANNIE O'SHANE.....*Maid at the Deering's*

SYNOPSIS.

'ACT I. *Living-room of the Deering house, In a suburb of New York.*

ACT II. *The same. Five minutes later.*

TIME. An evening of the present.

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

MATILDA DEERING. An elderly spinster, spare of figure and free of speech. Dress elaborate and fussy. Wears a large over-trimmed hat. Dominates the house-hold. Considers money necessary to respectability.

HAROLD DEERING. A slim boy of eighteen, discontent with his narrow life. Manly instincts. Wears blue serge sack suit.

ALICE DEERING. A pretty girl of seventeen. Her spirit means to marry the man of her choice.

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Wears a dark tailored suit in Act I, and a white evening dress in Act II.

ARCHIE CLARKE. A tall, good-looking man of twenty-five, just starting a legal practice. Wears a dress-suit, with ulster over it at entrance.

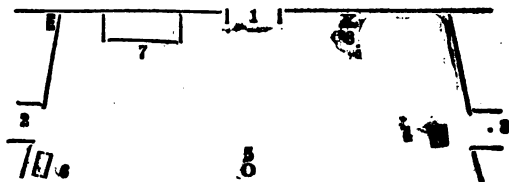
BILL WORTH. A heavy-set man of thirty-five years, rough and illiterate. Unshaven. Wears old trousers, and a faded coat over a sweater. Has a red handkerchief tied around his neck.

ANNIE O'SHANE. A bright Irish house-maid of thirty years. Wears cap and apron.

THE RED LAMP.

ACT I.

SCENE:—*Living-room in the Deering house. A comfortably furnished room. A door rear center from hall; a door R. to other rooms. A window, with shade, at L. A table at center bearing books, magazines, paper-cutter, newspaper, matches and a small unlighted lamp of unique design, with a red globe. A stand by the window L., with a potted plant on it. A closet or cupboard rear R. A couch R. front. Chairs, rugs, pictures, etc. Electric wall-lights, worked by a switch at rear.*



1. Door from hall. 2. Door from other rooms. 3. Window.
4. Stand. 5. Table. 6. Couch. 7. Closet. 8. Electric light switch.

CURTAIN.

DISCOVERED:—*The stage is discovered empty, and dark, except for light from outside through the window L. The window is pushed in and BILL WORTH climbs stealthily into room. He looks about, and tip-toes across*

the room. He knocks over a chair which falls with a crash. He starts and peers off R. HAROLD DEERING enters rear.

HAROLD. Is that you, Annie?

(BILL WORTH doesn't answer. He starts to go off R. HAROLD turns electric light switch: the lights flare on. Stage fully lighted. BILL turns with a start.)

HAROLD. *(surprised but not frightened)* Hello!

(BILL moves toward him. HAROLD springs to the table, picks up the paper-cutter and aims it at BILL.)

HAROLD. Throw up your hands or I fire!

(BILL stops short and throws up his hands.)

HAROLD. I say, this is a go!

BILL. It's me first job, mister.

HAROLD. What are you after?

BILL. Somethin' to eat.

HAROLD. Are you really hungry?

BILL. Am I? I could eat the cheese out of a mouse-trap, and if you've got a canary;—well, hide the bird-seed, that's all.

HAROLD. There's plenty of food in the house. I hate to see a man go hungry. If food is really all you want, I'll give it to you.

BILL. You're all right, boy. *(starts toward HAROLD)*

HAROLD. *(waving paper-cutter)* Hold on! *(BILL stops)* How do I know this isn't a tri *(sternly)* I've a mind to put a bullet thro' your heart.

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(BILL laughs and lowers his hands.)

BILL. Cut it out!

HAROLD. What do you mean?

BILL. Just what I say. If you want my heart you'll have to cut it out; that's a paper-cutter you've got there.

HAROLD. Well, it's a sharp one!

BILL. (advancing) You're a sharp 'un.

(HAROLD drops the paper-cutter to table, and puts up his fists in fighting attitude.)

HAROLD. Come on!

(As Bill reaches the table, he sees the lamp and stops short with a start of amazement. Leans over, excited, and picks up the lamp.)

BILL. Where'd you get this lamp, mister?

HAROLD. That belonged to my father.

BILL. It came from South America.

HAROLD. Yes. My father bought it down there years ago. Have you been to South America?

BILL. Pretty near all over it! There's only one place where they make lamps like this. In Terra-Bara, Peru.

HAROLD. That's where father got it.

BILL. It's a good-luck lamp.

HAROLD. A good-luck lamp? I didn't know that.

BILL. You didn't know that? Why the natives down there believe that when you're in trouble all you've got to do is to light one of these lamps, and all troubles disappear. I believe it, too. I've used it. Why, once down in Terra-Bara I was out on a job, lit one of these lamps, and what d'you think happened?

HAROLD. What did happen? (expectant)

BILL. A man saw the light, come to the house and give me a good-payin' job then and there.

HAROLD. (*disappointed*) Oh, I thought it would have summoned up a genii at least.

BILL. No, this is a *real* good-luck lamp; it ain't Aladdin's lamp, or any other fairy-story one.

HAROLD. You believe that lamp brings good luck? (*as BILL nods*) Well, I don't. It never brought ~~me~~ any.

BILL. That's because you've never lighted it. See, the wick's not burned; it's brand new.

HAROLD. That's right. Say, I wonder who put that lamp there on the table. We always keep it in that closet. Good luck, eh? Well, I'll put it to the test. Hand it over; I'll fill it.

BILL. (*shaking it*) It is filled: it's got oil in it already.

HAROLD. That's strange. Now I wonder who filled it!

BILL. (*puts lamp back on table*) You won't have to fight me, boy. I don't do any crooked work where there's one of these lamps around. This is where Billy Worth says good-night. (*moves L.*)

HAROLD. You're superstitious, are you?

BILL. That's right. And you know what I believe? Good luck'll come my way just because I found that lamp.

HAROLD. Wait; I'll get you something to eat before you go.

BILL. That's a starter.

HAROLD. (*takes up a match*) First I'm going to try this lamp and see if it brings *me* good luck.

BILL. (*looks around room*) You've got about everything a feller could want now, haven't you?

HAROLD. No. I'm tied here like a baby, I been treated like a kid all my life. I want to out and see the world, I want to travel, I want go to South America! (*strikes match*)

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BILL. Why don't you?

MATILDA. (*off stage*) Harold!

HAROLD. That's why! (*blows out match and calls off*) In just a minute, Auntie. (*to BILL*) My Aunt won't let me travel alone, and she won't travel with me till my sister is married. She has control of all the money.

BILL. She's got the key of the cash-box, eh?

HAROLD. Yes. Doesn't even let me have cigarette money.

BILL. (*taking dirty box of cigarettes from pocket*) Have one?

HAROLD. Will I? (*takes cigarette*) Say, my name's Harold Deering.

BILL. Mine's Bill Worth.

HAROLD. Say, Billy Worth, tell me about South America. Where's the best place for a man like me to go to?

MATILDA. (*off stage*) Harold!

HAROLD. (*speaking off*) Yes, Aunt Matilda.

MATILDA. (*off stage*) Are you in the living-room?

HAROLD. (*to BILL, frightened*) She's coming! If she finds you here, she'll— Heaven only knows what she won't do. Quick—the window!

BILL. (*as he hurries to window*) I could tell you a lot about South America.

HAROLD. Come back and tell me. My Aunt's going out; my sister's going with her. When they've gone, come back. I'll have some supper ready for you.

BILL. That was straight goods I gave you about this being my first crooked job.

HAROLD. I believe you. Hurry!

L. (*half through the window*) How'll I w when your Aunt's gone?

HAROLD. The red lamp! As soon as she's gone light the red lamp and put it here by the idow.

BILL. (*nods*) For good luck!

HAROLD. Yes, for good luck. When you see that red light in the window, you'll know the coast is clear.

BILL. (*nods*) And I'll come in at the door, and give you some fine pointers on South America.

HAROLD. Great!

MATILDA. (*off stage*) Harold!

HAROLD. Hurry!

(BILL climbs quickly out of the window and disappears from sight. HAROLD turns guiltily as MATILDA DEERING enters rear, her hat on, pulling on her gloves. HAROLD holds the cigarette quickly behind him. MATILDA carries a reticule.)

MATILDA. What are you doing, Harold?

HAROLD. I? Nothing at all. That is, I was admiring the night. Such a lovely night! The stars, the moon, such a glorious heaven! (*forgets and gestures with the hand in which he holds cigarette*)

MATILDA. A cigarette! You've been *smoking*. Against my wishes! Where did you get that cigarette, Harold? You needn't answer me. I know. Mr. Clarke gave it to you.

HAROLD. Archie Clarke?

MATILDA. Certainly. You needn't deny it. He's in love with your sister Alice. He has bribed you. What did you promise to do for Mr. Clarke in return for that poisonous weed? Don't perjure yourself! You brought your sister a note from Mr. Clarke, I dare say. What was in that note?

HAROLD. But Auntie——

MATILDA. I demand to know the contents that letter.

HAROLD. There wasn't any letter. Archie did

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give me the cigarette. (*he tosses it out of window*)
There, does that satisfy you?

MATILDA. Um! I shall have to question your sister about this.

HAROLD. Look here, Auntie, I want to go to South America.

MATILDA. South America! Harold! Never let me hear you speak of that horrible country again. Think of the wild characters there, the rough men! Besides, your sister and I need your protection. Which reminds me, Alice and I are going over to old Mrs. Terret's this evening for a cup of tea.

HAROLD. Want me to see you over?

MATILDA. No, it's only a step. You can see Mrs. Terret's light from the window there. (*HAROLD looks from window and nods*) I wish you to remain at home and guard the house. Annie is in, and will answer the door-bell if anyone calls. Emerson's Essays are here on the table, or if you prefer to read Bergson, here is his "Creative Evolution."

HAROLD. (*rebellious*) Oh, I want to get out in the world like Dad did, and *do* something!

MATILDA. There is plenty to do here. (*lowering her voice*) Keep a close watch on your sister. I believe Mr. Clarke finds some means to communicate with her in spite of my precautions.

HAROLD. Why do you object to Archie Clarke? I think Alice will be lucky to get him.

MATILDA. (*shocked*) It would be a calamity. How can you even picture such a thing?

HAROLD. He's good looking, isn't he?

MATILDA. I've never seen Mr. Clarke. I have no desire to see him. He is unsuited to Alice in every way.

HAROLD. Why is he?

MATILDA. A lawyer without a client! He's as poor as a church-mouse; practically penniless! When Alice marries, she will marry a man with a

substantial bank-account. I'll see to that. Economy is no longer in good taste. Besides, it's very uncomfortable. Mr. Clarke is out of the question.

HAROLD. He has a rich uncle.

MATILDA. Who may live for twenty years yet, and then leave his money to an Orphan-Asylum. I don't believe in speculation. Rich uncles are very uncertain quantities. Um! I wonder how old that Uncle is. If I could arrange a meeting between him and Alice, they might find a great deal in common. (*as HAROLD makes a gesture of disapproval and goes up*) Where are you going, Harold?

HAROLD. To fix up something to eat.

MATILDA. Always eating. Tell Annie I wish to speak with her.

HAROLD. Yes, Auntie. (*aside*) Poor Archie!

(*HAROLD exits rear. As MATILDA takes up the newspaper, ALICE DEERING enters R.*)

MATILDA. All ready to go, Alice? Why, where's your hat?

ALICE. I think I won't go out with you, Aunt Matilda. I have a head-ache. I'll stay at home.

MATILDA. Mrs. Terret especially wishes to see you, Alice.

ALICE. (*sitting on couch*) I don't feel up to calling, Auntie.

MATILDA. A head-ache powder will make you feel better at once. I'll get one for you.

ALICE. Please don't. I—I don't want to go out. Really I don't, Auntie.

MATILDA. Nonsense. I'll get the powders. Mrs. Terret shan't be disappointed if I can help it. I told her I'd bring you over for a cup of tea, and bring you over I shall!

(*MATILDA exits R.*)

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ALICE. You shan't! (*springs up*) You shan't, you shan't, you shan't! (*tearful*) Oh, why haven't I the courage to tell her, and face it out!

(ANNIE enters rear.)

ANNIE. You wanted me, Miss Deering? (*to ALICE*) Where's your Aunt?

ALICE. She'll be back in a moment. Oh, Annie, what shall I do? Aunt Matilda's going to make me go out with her, and—(*runs to ANNIE*)—Oh, Annie, you know!

ANNIE. (*sympathetic*) Is Mr. Clarke coming to-night, Miss Alice?

ALICE. Sh! Not so loud.

ANNIE. (*in a hoarse whisper*) Is Mr. Clarke coming to-night?

ALICE. Yes. I knew Auntie was going over to Mrs. Terret's. I wrote Archie. I told him to come. I told him as soon as Auntie'd gone I'd put a red light in the window there, so he'd know all was safe. (*goes rear to closet*) I'm going to use that little red lamp that father brought from South America. (*looks in closet*) Why, it isn't here.

ANNIE. Here it is on the table, Miss Alice, and all filled.

ALICE. (*down to table*) That's funny. Harold must have taken it out.

ANNIE. So it's to be a signal, is it?

ALICE. Yes: a signal to bring Archie to the house. And Auntie says I've got to go out with her! Weren't you ever in love, Annie?

ANNIE. I was that.

ALICE. Then you'll help me?

ANNIE. I will so. Lie down on the couch there, Miss Alice, and I'll rub your poor achin', throbbin', schemin' little head.

ALICE. Oh, thank you, Annie, you're a dear. (*lies on couch*: ANNIE sits by her and rubs her

forehead) Be careful not to muss my hair! Who were you in love with, Annie?

ANNIE. A fine feller, Miss Alice, but for one failin' he had, and couldn't get over it. No, it wasn't drink. It was worse than that. Drink you can cure, but the roamin' spirit in a man, you can't cure. That was his weakness; he must see the world, and for that he couldn't stay in one place and settle down. It was down amongst the naygars he must travel and among the Indigoes and the likes of them. (*sighs*) Whist, it was the sad waste of a fine man!

ALICE. Where is he now, Annie?

ANNIE. Among the Chilchileans likely, or the Perystiles—naygars all of them! He went *that* way, and I went *this*, and we lost track of one another.

ALICE. Do you still care for him?

ANNIE. Can I say? If he should turn up and be willin' to settle down, and lookin' for someone to settle with,—(*breaks off and sighs*)

ALICE. You'd marry him!

ANNIE. Well, I'm not sayin' I wouldn't. (*looks at lamp*) So that red light in the windy's to bring your lawyer-boy in, is it?

ALICE. (*nods*) Sh! Here comes Auntie. Rub harder!

(ANNIE *applies herself to rubbing ALICE's forehead* as MATILDA *enters R., with powders.*)

ANNIE. Sure, it's not good for you that you should be goin' out this night, Miss Alice.

MATILDA. Do you feel worse, Alice?

ALICE. No better. If I go out I shall suffer terribly.

MATILDA. Here. Take one of these powders. (*gives ALICE powder*)

ALICE. I'll take it as soon as I go to my room.

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Thank you, Auntie. You won't mind if I don't go with you, will you?

MATILDA. Mrs. Terret will be disappointed, it's all I can say. But if you will suffer, of course it's best you remain here. Annie will look after you. (to ANNIE) Mr. Harold will remain at home to watch the house, Annie. I wish you to watch Mr. Harold.

ANNIE. Yes, Miss Deering.

MATILDA. If you smell cigarette smoke, investigate at once. That's all, Annie.

ANNIE. I understand, Miss Deering. (*aside*) The poor bye!

(ANNIE *exits rear.*)

MATILDA. By the way, Alice, does this embryotic lawyer, Mr. Clarke, smoke cigarettes?

ALICE. No.

MATILDA. Strange! Have you received a letter to-day from this—this impoverished person?

ALICE. Not a line.

MATILDA. Very good. See that you have no further communication with this—this presuming pretender. I ask it in your own interests, Alice. I want to see you happily married. I believe in love; but I don't believe in a girl's falling in love with a poor man.

ALICE. Archie has a rich Uncle.

MATILDA. That's the second time my attention has been called to that fact this evening. Now, if you found the Uncle congenial——

ALICE. Auntie!

MATILDA. Um! It's understood then, that we never mention the nephew again. Now go to your room and take the powder.

ALICE. Yes, Aunt Matilda. Have a good time and don't hurry home.

MATILDA. Be sure I shall take my time.

ALICE. Good!

MATILDA. What's that?

ALICE. I said "Good-night," Auntie. (*runs R. and turns at door*) Good-night.

MATILDA. Good-night, Alice.

(*ALICE exits R., MATILDA crosses to table, takes up a match, strikes it, removes globe from red lamp, and lights the lamp. She adjusts the wick and replaces the globe. HAROLD enters rear, sees what she is doing, and stops short in alarm. Then he comes down quickly.*)

HAROLD. Aunt Matilda! What are you doing?

MATILDA. Lighting the red lamp.

HAROLD. You mustn't do that!

MATILDA. Why not?

HAROLD. It's—it's never been lighted before.

MATILDA. Very true. I had it cleaned and filled this afternoon.

HAROLD. But—but it's haunted, sort of an Aladdin's lamp; I mean things happen when you light it.

MATILDA. Nothing's happened yet.

HAROLD. But great Crickets! They will happen! Look here, Auntie, what are you lighting it for, anyway?

MATILDA. I told old Mrs. Terret I'd put it in the window there before I started over, so she'd know when to put the tea-water on to boil.

HAROLD. The tea-water! Ha, ha, ha! By the window! (*laughs hoarsely*)

MATILDA. There's nothing to laugh at.

HAROLD. You bet there isn't.

MATILDA. Put the lamp on the stand there, Harold.

HAROLD. Honest Injun, Aunt Matilda, that lamp is supposed to bring a person good luck.

MATILDA. I don't believe it.

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HAROLD. Neither do I!

MATILDA. What are you waiting for? Put the lamp on the stand.

HAROLD. On the stand, yes. (*takes up lamp reluctantly, and holds it between himself and window. MATILDA scans the newspaper. HAROLD removes plant from stand, puts plant on floor, carries stand L. rear, puts it down there, puts lamp on the stand and returns center*)

HAROLD. The tea'll be done by this time, Auntie.

MATILDA. There's plenty of time. (*looks L.*) Harold! The lamp!

HAROLD. You told me to put it on the stand.

MATILDA. I didn't tell you to move the stand. Put it by the window. Am I explicit? Put it by the window!

HAROLD. Yes, Auntie. (*HAROLD goes L. rear, puts lamp on floor there, lifts the stand back to its first position by window, and puts plant back on it. As he finishes, MATILDA looks L.*)

MATILDA. Harold! Why don't you do as I say?

HAROLD. You said to put the stand by the window.

MATILDA. I did. Now leave the stand where it is, and put the lamp on it!

HAROLD. I'll do just as you say, Auntie. (*HAROLD goes L. rear, picks up the lamp, takes it to stand, and puts it down on stand, so that the plant is between it and window; the plant's thick leaves hiding its light*)

MATILDA. (*reading paper*) Another terrible automobile accident! Car turned turtle. Man killed on the spot. The victim not identified. (*looks L.*) Why have you left that plant there?

HAROLD. The plant needs the air more than the amp does, Auntie.

MATILDA. Remove the plant. Leave the lamp. Leave the stand. Am I clear?

HAROLD. Perfectly. (*MATILDA looks at paper,*

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HAROLD *removes plant and as he does so, he blows out the lamp. Puts plant on floor. Aside*) Bill shan't be torn to pieces, if I can help it.

MATILDA. The car caught fire and burned up. *(looks L.)* Harold, the lamp's gone out!

HAROLD. So it has! The draught from the window must have been too much for it.

MATILDA. Close the window. Bring the lamp here. I'll re-light it.

HAROLD. I wouldn't waste any more oil if I were you, Annie. Mrs. Terret must have seen the light. *(closes window)*

MATILDA. Bring me the lamp!

HAROLD. I was just going to. *(takes it up reluctantly, and crosses to center table with it)*

MATILDA. I am a woman of my word. I told Mrs. Terret I would show a red light from the window. I will show it. *(she re-lights lamp. As she does so, HAROLD, making sure she isn't watching him, crosses L., and pulls down the green window-shade)*

MATILDA. There! Please re-place the lamp on the stand, Harold.

HAROLD. *(cheerful)* And leave the stand where it is! Yes, Auntie. *(takes the lamp and puts it on stand by window)* Will the automobile recover? I mean will the man be repaired?

MATILDA. You're nervous, Harold. A case of too much cigarette-smoking! I see it plainly.

HAROLD. I wish I could see a case of cigarettes plainly!

(ALICE enters R. Wears a jeweled necklace and a diamond ring. Stops in surprise, then shows alarm.)

ALICE. That lamp!

HAROLD and MATILDA. Alice!

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ALICE. Who put that lamp there? Take it away!
(hurries L.)

MATILDA. Are you out of your senses?

ALICE. (relieved) Oh, it's all right. The shade's down.

HAROLD. Sh! Don't tell her.

MATILDA. The window-shade down? Who pulled it down? Harold, put up that window-shade!

ALICE. I'll put it up, Auntie. (ALICE blows out lamp, and runs up the window-shade)

MATILDA. (not observing) It's a signal for Mrs. Terret to put the tea-water on to boil. Why aren't you in bed, Alice?

ALICE. I thought you'd gone. I mean I heard voices down here. I came down to investigate.

MATILDA. (starts) Where did you get that necklace? That ring?

ALICE. (confused) I—I was just trying them on.

MATILDA. They are presents from Mr. Clarke? Mr. Clarke gave them to you?

ALICE. Yes, he did.

MATILDA. He dared! I will return them to him. Give them to me at once.

ALICE. No, no, Auntie.

MATILDA. At once! (ALICE removes the necklace and rings slowly and gives them to MATILDA) How could you consent to receive such presents from a lawyer without clients? Um! They look real. But that's neither here nor there. (lays them on table and looks L.) Who put out that lamp? Don't answer me. Things have come to a pretty pass when I can't light a lamp in my own house. Do you object to my taking a cup of tea with Mrs. Terret, Alice? Do you, Harold? Don't answer me. Not a word. Bring me the lamp, I'll light it once more—for good luck.

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ALICE. Good luck?

HAROLD. Good Lord!

(ALICE and HAROLD hurry to the stand together:
ALICE takes up the lamp: they speak low to
one another.)

ALICE. When I cross the room with the lamp,
trip me up.

HAROLD. Trip you up?

ALICE. Yes, so I'll fall and break the globe.

HAROLD. Fine!

MATILDA. I am waiting for the lamp, Alice.

ALICE. Coming, Auntie. It's so fragile, I have
to handle it carefully. (ALICE starts center with
lamp. HAROLD hurries ahead of her, puts out his
foot. ALICE trips on it and falls. The lamp slips
from her hands, and the red globe breaks in frag-
ments)

MATILDA. Alice Deering!

ALICE. (rising) It's Harold's fault.

HAROLD. (with mock anger) Why didn't you
watch where you were going?

ALICE. Why will you have such big feet?

HAROLD. Whose big feet?

MATILDA. Children, children, don't quarrel. It's
a small matter, after all.

HAROLD. (picks up lamp and puts it on table)
I'm glad you take it sensibly, Aunt Matilda.

MATILDA. Why shouldn't I?

ALICE. (aside to HAROLD) You're a dear!

HAROLD. (aside to ALICE) That ~~was~~ good
luck, eh?

ALICE. Good-night, Auntie, I'm off to rest this
time. Hurry over to Mrs. Terret's. Good-night.
(ALICE runs out R.)

HAROLD. I'll go see if my supper's ready. I'm

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glad you take it sensibly, Aunt Matilda. (HAROLD exits rear)

MATILDA. Why shouldn't I take it sensibly—when with the lamp there came a half dozen extra globes! (MATILDA goes up to closet rear R., opens it, takes out a second red globe, comes down center, lights lamp, puts on the new globe, carries the lighted lamp L., and puts it on stand; moving the stand closer still to window. Then she seats herself L. of center-table)

MATILDA. Now to give the tea-water time to boil. (she takes up the newspaper and begins to read it)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE:—The same. Five minutes later.

DISCOVERED:—MATILDA seated as at end of ACT I. The red lamp still burning by the window. As the curtain ascends the door-bell is heard ringing off stage, loud and long. MATILDA lays down the paper and looks up.)

MATILDA. The door-bell! Who can that be?

(ALICE enters R., in a white evening dress. She stops short with a cry as she sees her Aunt and the lamp.)

ALICE. Aunt Matilda! The signal!

ANNIE is seen passing the door rear, on her way

to answer the door-bell. ALICE runs rear and stops her, as MATILDA rises slowly in surprise.)

ALICE. Annie, Annie! Don't go to the door! Don't answer the bell! Annie!

(ALICE brings ANNIE down into the room.)

ANNIE. It's Mr. Clarke! Saints be with us! What'll happen now?

MATILDA. Mr. Clarke! So, Alice Deering, you were expecting Mr. Clarke! ~~You have changed your dress to receive him!~~ You had no intention of going to bed!

ALICE. Oh, why didn't I remember the lamp had an extra globe!

MATILDA. Ah! The red-lamp was a signal to bring Mr. Clarke to the house! You meant to put it in the window after I had gone! *(door-bell rings off stage a second time)* So Mr. Clarke is at the door!

ALICE. Don't blame Archie, Aunt Matilda, it's all my fault. I asked him to call. I'm to blame.

MATILDA. Return to your room, Alice. I'll save my remarks for Mr. Clarke.

ALICE. Poor Archie!

MATILDA. See that Miss Alice goes to her room, Annie. I will answer the bell myself. Harold said that lamp brought good luck. Well, this is a piece of good luck!

(MATILDA exits rear.)

ANNIE. There, there, Miss Alice, perhaps things'll come out all right yet.

ALICE. Right? How can they? Hark! She opened the front door. *(puts her hands over her ears)* I'm afraid to listen!

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ANNIE. Come to your room, Miss Alice: I'll wager the lawyer-boy is a match for her.

(ALICE exits R., followed off by ANNIE. MATILDA enters rear, followed in by BILL WORTH, dazed.)

MATILDA. (*talking as she enters*) Don't attempt to defend yourself, Mr. Clarke. You arranged for a clandestine meeting here this evening. Why, your very clothes condemn you; they show you meant to disguise yourself. (BILL tries to speak; she gestures him to be silent) Didn't you wait for that red light in the window before ringing the bell? Wasn't that the signal to let you know I had left the house?

BILL. Yes, it was; but——

MATILDA. Not another word. You admit your identity—you confess your guilt! Be seated, please: I have a few words I wish to say to you. Sit down!

BILL. (*meek*) Yes'm. (*sits*)

MATILDA. Kindly allow me to do the talking. You have disregarded my wishes, my commands by coming here, but now that you are here, I will tell you exactly what I think of you.

BILL. (*rises*) Just a minute——

MATILDA. Be seated!

BILL. Yes'm. (*sits*)

MATILDA. I know what you want to say. That you have a rich Uncle.

BILL. Have I?

MATILDA. But he may live for twenty years yet, and it's not certain he'll leave you his money when he does die.

LL. Isn't it?

MATILDA. No, it isn't. There's no use discussing it. Before I say anything further, I wish to show you this ring. (*takes ring from table and holds it to BILL*)

BILL. I can't take that!

MATILDA. You must take it. I insist. My niece has no further use for it.

BILL. Hasn't she?

MATILDA. None whatever. She wishes you to take it.

BILL. That's real kind of her. I always like to oblige a lady. (*takes ring and admires it*) It's a beaut!

MATILDA. You will also take this necklace (*holds necklace towards him*)

BILL. Hasn't your niece any use for the necklace either?

MATILDA. No use at all.

BILL. No, no, I can't take the necklace too.

MATILDA. You must take it. You have no choice in the matter. I won't listen to a refusal.

BILL. Well, if you put it that way! (*takes necklace and admires it*) Just look at them sparklers! (*puts ring and necklace in pocket*) Is there anything else your niece wants to get rid of?

MATILDA. Not that I know of.

BILL. Where's Harold?

MATILDA. What do you want of my nephew?

BILL. He was going to give me somethin'.

MATILDA. Money? My nephew owes you money? How much has he borrowed from you? Don't explain. Merely mention the amount. (*opens reticule, takes out fountain-pen and check-book. BILL is unable to get a word in*) There's no use wasting words over the matter. I will make out a check for the entire amount. You shall have no excuse to return to this house. Is it twenty dollars—thirty—fifty—a hundred?

BILL. If you'll let me speak——

MATILDA. (*fiercely*) How much?

BILL. Oh, make it a hundred—I don't car

MATILDA. (*writing*) Payable to——

BILL. Make that payable to Bearer, will you

MATILDA. Certainly. I have no wish to write your name. (*tears out check and hands it to BILL*) It's useless to talk to you, I see that. I will merely state that of all the presumptuous, interfering, unprincipled men I ever met, you are the poorest specimen among the lot. You know the way out. Leave at once. If you ever return here I shall invoke the aid of the police.

(MATILDA *exits R.*)

BILL. A century! (*blows check dry and pockets it*) It's the lamp that done it! What next, I wonder?

(ANNIE *enters R.; stops in surprise.*)

ANNIE. Is it a ghost I'm seein' ? Is it the ghost of Bill Worth?

BILL. Annie! Annie O'Shane!

ANNIE. Is it really you, Bill?

BILL. Is it? (*takes her hands*) This is all because of the lamp. It's workin' over-time. You never got married, did you, Annie?

ANNIE. Not a bit of it. You never got eat up by the naygars, did you, Bill?

BILL. Do I look it? I've seen the world, girl, and I've quit travellin'. I'm goin' to settle down now. That is, if I can get a nice girl I know to settle down with me.

ANNIE. Well, I'm not at all sure you can.

BILL. (*takes necklace from pocket*) How'd you like to wear this pretty necklace, Annie?

ANNIE. Holy Saints! It's fit for a Duchess! It's too fine for me, Bill. (*clasps necklace about neck*)

LL. (*showing ANNIE the check*) How'd you to help me spend this check, Annie? (*reads*) "to Bearer—one hundred dollars."

ANNIE. Mother of Hiven! Did you come by these honest, Bill?

BILL. Fair and honest.

ANNIE. If you really and truly mean to settle down, Bill Worth, I guess you can get that girl to take you!

BILL. Done! (*takes ring from pocket*) You're engaged to me, Annie O'Shane, and here's the ring to make it bindin'. (*puts it on her finger*)

ANNIE. Bindin' it is. (*admires ring*) A real diamond! Just see the glitter of it!

BILL. I'll never live to marry you, Annie, if I don't get somethin' to eat pretty quick. I'm starvin' to death.

ANNIE. Starvin', are you? Come right along into the kitchen, Bill, and I'll feed you up. Unless you've spoiled your taste for cold pork and pumpkin pie with your eatin' of peppery naygar foods.

BILL. Cold pork and pumpkin pie! Gee—it sounds like the food they feed the angels on. Lead the way, Annie.

ANNIE. Come along, Bill. (*admires ring*) Just look at the sparkle of it!

(ANNIE and BILL exit rear. MATILDA enters R.)

MATILDA. There! I've told Alice I gave Mr. Clarke the jewels, and that he agreed never to return here. (*door-bell rings off stage*) Who can that be?

(HAROLD enters rear, carrying a tray of food, pork, pie, etc. He stops in the door-way as he sees MATILDA.)

HAROLD. Aunt Matilda! I thought you'd gone!

MATILDA. Don't block the door-way, Harold wish to answer the door-bell. Annie is evider busy.

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HAROLD. I'll do it. Let me answer the bell. (*comes down and puts tray on table*) Wait, Aunt Matilda. (*as she goes up to door rear*) It's a friend of mine. I'll have to confess. It's a man I befriended—Billy Worth. He's a rough sort, but he was hungry, half starving. I told him if he'd come to the house I'd give him something to eat. He's out of a job. We need a gardener, don't we?

MATILDA. It's not right to ask rough characters to the house, Harold; but your kind heart does you credit. I'll admit this man, William Worth, and see if his story is true.

(MATILDA *exits rear.*)

HAROLD. Now, if Billy only behaves himself and doesn't talk about South America, it'll be all right. (*crosses L.*) Here they come.

(MATILDA *enters rear, followed by* ARCHIE CLARKE, *who has his ulster buttoned over his dress-suit.*)

MATILDA. I understand you are looking for a position as gardener. What experience have you had in this line? (*crosses R. and sits on couch*)

HAROLD. (*starts and speaks low*) Archie Clarke!

CLARKE. (*low*) Who put that lamp in the window?

HAROLD. (*low*) What are you doing here?

CLARKE. That lamp—a signal from your sister!

HAROLD. Good Lord! Auntie thinks you're a gardener. Let her think so or you'll never get out of this house alive. (*as CLARKE opens his ulster*—*wing dress-suit*) Don't let her see your clothes!

CLARKE *re-buttons ulster*)

MATILDA. Where were you last employed, William?

CLARKE. *William?* Er—why—I—I was employed by the Duke of Salisbury, Madam.

MATILDA. By the Duke of Salisbury! Splendid! Take off your coat and make yourself comfortable.

CLARKE. I can't. I—I don't care to have you see my clothes.

MATILDA. Poor fellow—are they as ragged as all that? How did you come to lose your place with the Duke?

CLARKE. You see it was this way. The Duke wanted me to plant Jack-in-the-pulpits among the Black-eyed-Susans. "I can't do it, Duke," I said, "I can't mix up the Jacks and the Susans like that: it's too scandalous."

MATILDA. Quite right!

CLARKE. He persisted. I refused. He gave me the choice of doing as he wished or leaving his employ. Could I submit to such an outrageous proceeding? I could not. I left his employ.

MATILDA. Um! Have you references?

CLARKE. References? Er—ah—unfortunately I left them at home.

MATILDA. Where is your home?

CLARKE. My home? Why it's—it's—(*scowls at HAROLD*) Where is it?

HAROLD. Don't excite Bill, Auntie; he's nervous, weak.

MATILDA. Of course, he's half starved,—I forgot. (*to CLARKE*) Harold told me you were hungry. Sit right down at the table and help yourself. Don't hesitate, don't be backward,—eat everything!

HAROLD. Go to it, William. (*aside*) Eat, or she'll find you're a fraud.

CLARKE. (*aside*) I've just finished my dinner!

MATILDA. Come—aren't you really hungry?

CLARKE. Hungry's not the word for it, Madam! (*sits at table, takes up knife and fork, cuts a piece of meat, looks about helplessly*)

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MATILDA. It's always a pleasure to see a hungry man satisfy his appetite.

(CLARKE groans and puts the meat in his mouth.
HAROLD grins. Watched by MATILDA, CLARKE is forced to continue eating.)

MATILDA. I will consider employing you, William. My niece has charge of the garden, however. I will ask her to question you concerning your knowledge of bulbs and flowers.

CLARKE. Splendid! (as MATILDA looks at him sharply) This supper, I mean: it's splendid.

MATILDA. I'm glad you like it. Why don't you eat the pie? Don't be bashful about it: let us see you enjoy the pie.

HAROLD. Yes, let us see you enjoy the pie, William.

(CLARKE frowns at HAROLD, looks at MATILDA, takes the piece of pie up in his hand, and hesitates.)

CLARKE. (to MATILDA) Will your niece see me this evening?

MATILDA. Yes, as soon as you finish your supper.

CLARKE. Then it's worth it! (crams the pie into his mouth, gulps and bolts it as quickly as possible. Coughs. HAROLD slaps him on the back. MATILDA goes R.)

MATILDA. I'll see if my niece is still up.

(MATILDA exits R.)

CLARKE. (angry) You're a nice one to make eat all that cold stuff! But if I see Alice I won't complain. (starts at a thought) Suppose ice gives me away!

HAROLD. Whew! I never thought of that. Don't

let her see your face at first. Look out of the window—admire the glorious heavens!

(CLARKE *nods, crosses L., and looks from window as MATILDA enters R., followed by ALICE. MATILDA crosses center. HAROLD crosses quickly R., to ALICE.*)

MATILDA. This man was last in the employ of the Duke of Salisbury, Alice. That is in his favor. My niece is here to question you, William.

HAROLD. (*low to ALICE*) Don't jump—it's Archie.

(CLARKE *faces her. ALICE starts, but controls herself.*)

ALICE. Be seated, please: we have a good deal to talk about.

CLARKE. Yes, we have.

MATILDA. One moment! If there's anything that bores me stiff, it's bulbs and flowers. Mrs. Terret will wonder what has become of me. I'll excuse myself and go over to Mrs. Terret's, Alice. Harold, if this gardener is satisfactory, arrange for his return in the morning.

HAROLD. Yes, Auntie; I'm sure Alice will keep him.

MATILDA. Employed by the Duke of Salisbury! It will be something to boast of! But the tea must be done by this time.

(MATILDA *exits rear.*)

CLARKE. Alice——

HAROLD. Sh!

(*The three stand listening: a door heard close off.*)

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HAROLD. She's gone! (*as CLARKE and ALICE meet center, and take hands*) Wait a minute! (*HAROLD runs L., and pulls down window-shade*) Now go ahead!

ALICE. How can you be so silly, Harold?

CLARKE. Don't make a fool of yourself, Harold.

HAROLD. (*grins*) Want another piece of pie? (*as CLARKE frowns*) What's become of Bill Worth, that's what I want to know.

CLARKE. Go sit on the front steps and watch for him.

HAROLD. Two's a company, eh? Yes, I'll go out and look for Bill. (*goes up to door rear, turns and imitates MATILDA'S voice*) "Let us see you enjoy the pie, William."

(*CLARKE shakes his fist at HAROLD. HAROLD laughs and exits rear. CLARKE slips off his overcoat.*)

CLARKE. (*as they sit on couch R., front*) Alice, are you going to let your Aunt stand between us forever? Don't you care enough for me to brave her anger?

ALICE. Archie, isn't your Uncle ever going to die?

CLARKE. I don't believe so. He's off on an automobile trip now. There's no use counting on the old Miser's money. My practice is picking up, Alice: we'll have to economize, but we won't starve.

ALICE. It's Auntie who cares about the money. I think living in a flat will be fun.

CLARKE. Then let's defy your Aunt, and elope.

ALICE. Archie!

CLARKE. Now,—to-night. Why not? It's the way we'll ever get ahead of your Aunt.

ICE. Are you sure there's no one else you for?

ARKE. Of course there's no one else.

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ALICE. I'll do it! It'll serve Aunt Matilda right.

CLARKE. Good for you! We can catch the 9:42.
(looks at watch) There's no time to waste.

ALICE. (as they rise) I'll call Annie to help me pack some clothes. (up and calls off) Annie, Annie!

CLARKE. I'll get Harold to help us. (calls off)
Oh, Harold!

(CLARKE exits rear.)

ALICE. (calling) Annie, Annie! (as ANNIE runs in rear) Help me pack my suit-case, Annie. (starts) Where did you get that necklace—that ring?

ANNIE. Sure, ain't they the lovely things, Miss Alice? A gentleman friend gave them to me. Think of it, Miss Alice, he loves me!

ALICE. Oh! I wouldn't have believed it possible! (sobs) Archie—Archie! (CLARKE enters rear. ALICE turns on him) I'll not elope with you, after all. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Archie Clark! Thank goodness, I've found you out in time!

CLARKE. Found me out? (to ANNIE) What's happened? (sees jewels) What are you wearing that necklace for? That ring? (to ALICE) So this is all you care for my presents—you give them to your maid!

ALICE. (angry) I give them to her? You gave them to her!

CLARKE. I did nothing of the sort!

ALICE. Who did give them to you, Annie?

(BILL WORTH and HAROLD enter rear.)

BILL. I did. The old lady made me take. 1.

HAROLD. Aunt Matilda thought Bill was - 1,

Archie. (to ALICE) Don't you see, Alice

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ANNIE. (*as ALICE nods*) It's all a mistake, Miss Alice. (*removes jewels*) These are too fine for the likes of me. (*hands ALICE the jewels*) It's Bill himself I've got back from the naygars, Miss Alice, and that's enough.

CLARKE. Alice—will you go with me now?

ALICE. Archie, forgive me. Yes, I've got my courage up,—I'll go with you. We'll elope before Auntie gets back. Come Annie, help me with my things—hurry.

(ALICE runs out R.)

ANNIE. An elopement, is it? Saints Alive!

(ANNIE exits R.)

CLARKE. Here, help me into my coat. (BILL and HAROLD help him on with his ulster) Alice and I can catch the 9:42 to the city, cross over to Jersey, knock up a Justice of the Peace, and be married by eleven o'clock. Keep your Aunt here till eleven o'clock, Harold. You can do it one way or another. Then break the news to her gently that I'm her nephew-in-law.

HAROLD. Gently! I might as well try to explode a stick of dynamite gently!

(ALICE runs in R., with hat and cloak on. ANNIE follows her, carrying a suit-case.)

ALICE. I'm all ready, Archie.

CLARKE. We'll just have time to catch the 9:42. (*he takes suit-case from ANNIE*) Come along!

(CLARKE and ALICE go up towards door rear.)

ANNIE. (*tearful*) Oh, Miss Alice, I can't help yin'.

BILL. Good luck, folks.

HAROLD. Bless you, my children, bless you!

(*As CLARKE and ALICE start off rear, MATILDA'S voice is heard off stage.*)

MATILDA. Alice! Harold! Where are you?

(*They all stand transfixed for a moment.*)

HAROLD. Aunt Matilda—she's back!

ALICE. (*tearful*) Oh, Archie, she'll never let me see you again.

BILL. The window! Go out by the window. (*runs L., raises shade and opens window*)

CLARKE. Yes—we'll make a get-away by the window!

(*CLARKE and ALICE hurry L. to window.*)

ALICE. Go out in the hall and stop her, Annie.

ANNIE. Yes, Miss Alice.

(*ANNIE runs out rear. HAROLD stands in doorway rear.*)

HAROLD. I'll hold the door-way!

CLARKE. (*throws suit-case out of window and starts to climb through*) Can you make it, Alice?

ALICE. Can I? Watch me.

(*CLARKE drops from view. ALICE climbs through window after him: BILL assisting. ALICE drops from view. BILL turns, as MATILDA enters rear, excited. MATILDA sees BILL, and crosses to him with outstretched hands.*)

MATILDA. My dear Mr. Clarke! You have gone—I'm so glad. Let me be the first to congræ

THE RED LAMP.

35

late you! I've just heard the news at Mrs. Terret's. Mrs. Terret told me. You will always be welcome under my roof. I'm delighted that you've found favor in the eyes of my niece. (*shakes BILL's limp hand: BILL dazed*) You haven't heard? An automobile accident—I read of it this evening—the victim has been identified as your Uncle. I congratulate you; I condole with you. He's left you his entire fortune—a fabulous amount! I'll call Alice; you shall see Alice at once. Harold, make Mr. Clarke comfortable. (*crosses R., calling off*) Alice, dear! Alice!

(MATILDA *exits R.*)

HAROLD. What's that? Archie's Uncle dead? Archie worth a fortune?

BILL. Look-a-here, what's this all about, anyway? (*ANNIE enters rear: BILL turns to her*) The old woman say's I'm worth a fortune, Annie.

ANNIE. A fortune! Oh, Bill!

(*ANNIE throws her arms about BILL's neck. MATILDA enters R., sees them, and shrieks.*)

MATILDA. Annie! In the arms of Mr. Clarke! (*to BILL*) Is this your devotion to my niece, sir? (*to ANNIE*) How dare you put your arms about Mr. Clarke's neck? Don't attempt to explain. Oh, poor Alice! Poor Alice! Harold, where is your sister? what's become of Alice?

HAROLD. Brace up, Auntie: Alice has just eloped with the gardener!

MATILDA. Eloped with the gardener! (*sinks sobbing on couch*) Oh, this is too much! Just when a fortune was at hand! Oh!—Oh!—Oh!—salts! The gardener! I shall never recover from this blow.

HAROLD. (*Runs to window L.*) I'll call them

back. Lend a voice, Annie.. It's all right now.
(*makes a trumpet with his hands and calls from window*) Alice—Archie! Come back!

ANNIE. (*calling from window*) Miss Alice—Mr. Clarke!

BILL. (*calling from window*) Miss Deering—Mr. Clarke!

THE THREE. Mr. Clarke—come back!

(*MATILDA sits erect in amazement.*)

MATILDA. (*aside*) Mr. Clarke? Then who is—
(*looks at BILL, dazed*)

HAROLD. They've heard. They're coming.

(*The three turn from window. MATILDA rises.*)

MATILDA. Who is this man?

ANNIE. A gentleman friend of mine, Miss Deering.

HAROLD. It's Bill Worth, the man who was hungry and looking for a job. I'm sorry we tricked you, Auntie.

MATILDA. Tricked me? Nothing of the sort. Nonsense. I knew it all the time. Don't think you deceived me. Don't ask me to explain.

ANNIE. If you want me to stay on here, Miss Deering, you'll have to give Bill a job here, too.

MATILDA. (*to BILL*) I was merely testing your honesty: I'm satisfied to try you as a gardener.

(*ALICE and CLARKE enter rear.*)

ALICE. What's the matter, Harold;—Aunt Matilda!

MATILDA. My dear children, Harold called u
back to receive your old Aunt's blessing.

ALICE. (*amazed*) Your—what?

CLARKE. Your blessing?

MATILDA. Certainly. And to break a glad, er—a sad, piece of news to you, Mr. Clarke. Your Uncle was killed in an automobile accident. He has left you his entire fortune.

CLARKE. At last!

ALICE. Aunt Matilda—you *do* like Archie?

MATILDA. I think he's a splendid fellow, Alice. I've admired him from the first. Oh, I *pretended* to think you were the gardener, Mr. Clarke, to test your affection for Alice. I am convinced that you love her.

CLARKE. Alice! (*takes her hands*)

BILL. (*takes check from pocket*) I guess this check don't belong to me, Miss Deerin'.

MATILDA. Of course it does. Keep it—and keep silence!

BILL. I'll keep both!

ANNIE. It's a bargain, Miss Deering. (*BILL nods: he gives ANNIE the check. She takes his hands*)

HAROLD. Hold on—where do I come in?

MATILDA. As soon as your sister is married, Harold, I will take you on a cruise to South America.

HAROLD. Bully for you, Aunt Matilda! (*to ALICE and CLARKE*) Get married quick, will you?

CLARKE. Yes, we will—(*to ALICE, as she holds up a finger*)—for Harold's sake!

BILL. (*as HAROLD shakes MATILDA's hands gratefully*) It's the good-luck lamp that done this—every bit of it!

CURTAIN.

POSITIONS AT CURTAIN.

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. ALICE. | 3. MATILDA. | 5. ANNIE. |
| 2. CLARKE. | 4. HAROLD. | 6. BILL. |

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